

Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg and District

Historical Society

November 2021 — Issue 327

Saving the Past for the Future — Brookside, an Invaluable Community Resource

Robert Mikel will document the history and evolution of the site of Brookside and the surviving heritage buildings including the Rowe stables, the Winch cottage and the impressive Beaux-Arts summer house Strathmore. He will also discuss how the future use of the property could have a transformational impact on Cobourg.

Rob is a native of Cobourg who has researched the town's history and architecture for over 40 years. He worked for many years at the Toronto Historical Board, later Heritage Toronto. Since then, he has continued to pursue his interest in heritage. Rob has received both the Lieutenant-Governor's Community Heritage Award and Award for Lifetime Achievement as well as the ACO's Mary Millard Award. He has written two books: *Ontario House Styles* and *Cobourg: The Spirit of the Place*. He currently works for Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.



Join us on-line via **Zoom, Tuesday evening, November 23, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.**

Please register in advance for this webinar:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_OWwYKv4wSfm0n42Ty65RpQ

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

The Three Wars of C-Force: In Battle, in the PoW Camps and against the Federal Government



Dr. Tim Cook, Director of Research at the Canadian War Museum, will speak about Canada's C Force on December 7. The almost 2,000 soldiers and two nurses who formed C-Force were sent to defend the British colony of Hong Kong, arriving in early November 1941, only a

month before the Japanese attacked on 7/8 December 1941. On this 80th anniversary of the battle, Dr. Cook will explain the costly fighting and the horrendous prisoner of war experience faced by the survivors. He will finish by exploring the long campaign by veterans and their families to ensure the memory of the C-Force was not forgotten by Canadians.

Tim Cook is the Director of Research at the Canadian War Museum. He has curated over a dozen exhibitions and is the author or editor of 13 books.

Some of his books include the two-volume Great War history: *At the Sharp End* (2007) and *Shock Troops* (2008); and his three-volume history of Canada and the Second World War: *The Necessary War* (2014), *Fight to the Finish* (2015), and *The Fight for History* (2020). His many books are national best-sellers and have won prestigious prizes like the C.P. Stacey Award for best book in Canadian military history (twice), the J.W. Dafoe Award (twice), the Ottawa Book Award (three times), and the RBC Taylor Award. For his contributions to Canadian history, Dr. Cook is a recipient of the Governor General's History Award and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. He is a member of the Royal Society of Canada and the Order of Canada.



This meeting will be by Zoom. CDHS members will receive an email providing meeting registration details two weeks prior to the meeting.

Cobourg and District Historical Society Programme 2021–2022

All meetings start at 7:30 p.m. on the 4th Tuesday of each month except as noted below.

December 7, 2021 by Zoom

Canadians Under Attack December 7, 1941: An additional meeting in memory of the 80th Anniversary of the Pearl Harbour attack. Tim Cook an historian at the Canadian War Museum and member of the Order of Canada, will present.

Friday, January 28, 2022 (Expected to be an “in person” event)

Trivia Night, Social, Membership Drive: To be held at the Legion Village Pub, 111 Hibernia Street, Cobourg. Details to follow.

February 22, 2022 (Expected to be an “in-person” event)

Trent Severn Waterway: Saluting the human ingenuity and history of The Trent Severn Waterway.

March 22, 2022 (Expected to be an “in person” event)

Maureen Jennings - The Murdoch Mysteries Award Winning Author: Ms. Jennings will speak about her inspiration for the Murdoch mystery stories, her attention to historic detail and accuracy, and her role as creative consultant on the series. She would like to share her love of history and her ‘treasures’ which she hopes will enthrall others as well.

April 26, 2022 (Expected to be an “in person” event)

Rum Runners - The story of Ben Kerr and Prohibition: An exciting story of the roaring twenties in Ontario where rum runners challenged the storms of Lake Ontario to smuggle booze to the American side. Dan Buchanan will present the story of Ben Kerr, the most notorious of the bunch, who ran his last load of booze out of Presqu’île and ended up crushed by February ice near Colborne.

May 24, 2022 (TBA)

An “in-person” social accompanied with an outing or special presentation is planned. Details will be published in a future issue of *Historically Speaking*.

Member Matters

If you missed it

If you missed our October meeting you can enjoy the recorded version on YouTube. No special sign-in is required and you can view the video at any time on computers, tablets, smartPhones and smartTVs <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epVqq9bBXus>

Membership Renewal

It is membership renewal time. Even through the pandemic we incur costs that include: hosting of the Zoom webinars, our website, honorariums to our speakers, production of promotional materials and contributions to permanent historical features that are part of our town. We have kept the membership fee the same as last season: Individual Membership: \$30 and Family Membership: \$50

- If you wish to pay by e-transfer, please send to the Membership Chair, Brian Murphy: brianincobourg@gmail.com
- If you wish to pay by cheque, please make your cheque payable to the Cobourg and District Historical Society and mail it to:

CDHS Membership Chair
P.O. Box 911, Stn Main
Cobourg. ON K9A 4W4

Thank you for your continued support of the Cobourg and District Historical Society!

LOOK AT THIS PHOTO!

See that alleyway at 19 King Street West?
Now look at the wall on the west side.
Have you noticed the mural memorializing the Cobourg Rochester Ferry?



It's faded and a very sad reflection on our town and our history. The CDHS Executive have been contemplating how we can have it refurbished and brought back to life. We know very little about what's involved as yet however we know there will be fundraising required! Hopefully, we can encourage other history groups to join us in this endeavour. There is more good news — we know that the owner of the building is very keen to work with us in this restoration. Stay tuned for more information as we find out more ourselves. In the meantime (1) make sure you stop by the alleyway and have a look at the mural now and (2) read the reprint linked below about two gentlemen who were the originators of the mural. Many of you will recognize both people. Credit for this article goes to Cecilia Nasmith of *Today's Northumberland*. The full article is on their website at:

<http://todaysnorthumberland.ca/2019/05/12/cobourg-loses-stellar-citizen/>

This excerpt is from the comments by former Mayor Delanty:

“He (Mr. Bill Patchett) was an active figure in the Downtown Vitalization campaign but, years before that, provided the example himself by pooling funds with Dr. Thomas Hawke to completely redo the former Allen's Hardware building on King Street. Along with ground floor renovations, he installed second- and third-floor lofts and commissioned a mural on the building's east side honouring the car ferries that connected Cobourg with Rochester, NY, for almost half a century. Delanty was also impressed with the time and money Patchett invested in restoring the *Introibo Ad Altare Dei* statue from chronic vandalism and installing it outside the building, where it now is a mecca for art lovers and selfie snappers.”



Are You Interested?

We are considering a trip to the Kingston Penitentiary and Museum for our May 2022 Social. The outing would start with a Coach bus ride to Kingston (about 1.5 to 2 hours one way), the Standard 1.5 hour Guided Penitentiary Tour, lunch in the area, a tour of the Museum across the street from the "Pen" then back on the bus to Cobourg. Cost would be about \$100 per person for everything – bus, admission, lunch and bus. Members and guests are invited since we need to fill a bus with 56 people. For further details about what you will see in the penitentiary visit <https://www.kingstonpentour.com/plan-your-visit/tours-offered/> and <https://www.penitentiarymuseum.ca> for details of the associated museum.



Of course we will follow all COVID rules and regulations as well as ask that everyone attending be vaccinated.

Please contact Carla Jones at cgrucelajones@gmail.com for questions, comments and to express interest in the proposed trip.

A Cobourg Mystery?

Diane Chin

Whitehall was Cobourg's oldest building dating back to approximately 1812 although some architects and historians say earlier. Whitehall was one of the few remaining neo-classical Georgian structures built in what some refer to as the "Loyalist style."

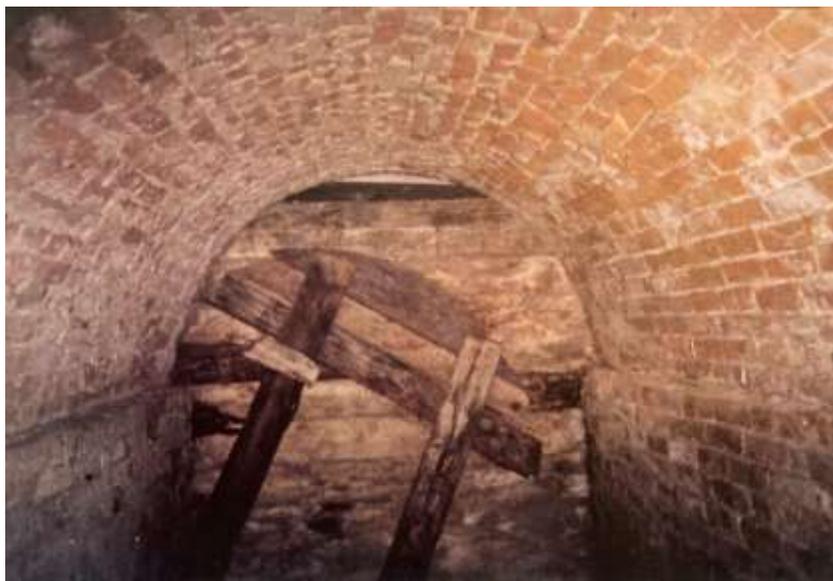
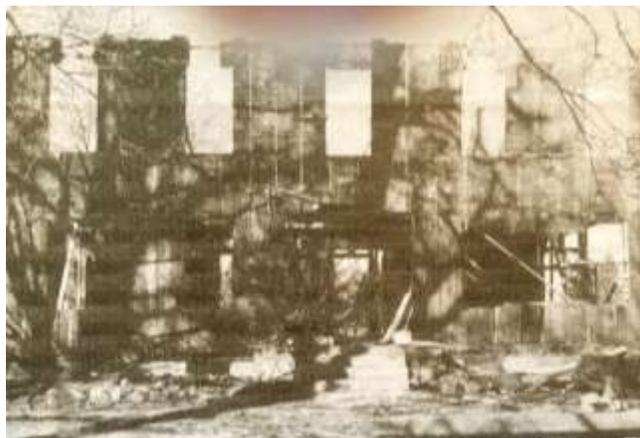


When it was constructed by the Burnham family it was located in the then village of Amherst, which preceded the development of the Town of Cobourg. It was located on land annexed by the Town from Hamilton Township in or about 1997. For those of you not familiar with Cobourg, it was located on Highway #2, Kingston Rd. which extends from Toronto to Kingston, known locally as Elgin St. It was situated on the north side and in 2001 encroached upon by commercial developments and a car dealership. On the south side was and still today is Northumberland Mall.

The Burnham family played a prominent role in the development of Cobourg and the surrounding area.

Zaccheus Burnham who built Whitehall, was a member of Parliament, promoter of Cobourg's harbour and the railway, and was a founder of the Cobourg and Port Hope Agricultural Fairs. Asa Burnham, brother to Zaccheus was a member of Cobourg's public administration as early as 1838 and became Mayor, six years before Confederation.

Many details distinguished Whitehall including a splendid porch, a once balanced entrance façade and original decorative details which were still to be found under the eaves, as well as beaded columns. Whitehall's vertical plank construction (see photo to the right) was the only known two storey example in Ontario. Along with an intricately constructed roof frame, two massive fireplace chimneys which served each room, and the kitchen hearth below grade, Whitehall was a heritage focal point.



The fireplaces were of particular interest. The corbelled arch support of the fireplaces in the basement were in excellent condition and were likely constructed to reduce the number of bricks required since bricks were scarce at the time. The fireplace mantles had different details from room to room and were generally in good condition as were the hearths.

In 2001, Architect Phil Carter wrote a report for the Town of Cobourg LACAC (Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee) and the Cobourg ACO (Architectural Conservancy Ontario) in which he concluded, "The fundamental structure of the house is sound with no signs of sagging or major deterioration. This is a testament to a soundly built home of fine construction detailing." Mr. Carter recommended that the property should be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

In the ACO Cobourg newsletter of February 2002, it was noted that Whitehall was being deconstructed despite great efforts by many including ACO, throughout at least three years, to find funding or a new location or a new owner and use for the building itself. The land was sold and Mr. Brown, a lawyer from Toronto acquired the building for the great sum of one dollar. It is noted in that publication that it was being “painstakingly dismantled” to be relocated elsewhere and that is where the story becomes cold. Mr. Brown is nowhere to be found. Some have said that the bits from the building sit in a tractor trailer somewhere in Cobourg. Others say it was to be rebuilt in Orangeville and others say Ancaster which is now part of Hamilton. The Hamilton Branch of ACO have never heard of it there.

During that same time period Cobourg had lost the Model School on University Ave. and another very old home known as “The Lawn.” Now Sidbrook is possibly facing the same fate. This does not bode well for Strathmore, part of the Brookside Facility, recently closed by the Provincial Government.

As for Whitehall, we can still hope that it will resurface somewhere. But for now the tale is unfinished...

Announcements

Hastings County Historical Society

At a recent Hastings County Historical Society meeting archaeologist Bill Fox presented a chronological review of archaeological evidence for the millennia of Indigenous occupation across the landscape of what is now known as Hastings County. This was followed by a reconsideration of archaeological and historical documentation concerning Indigenous - European relations during the 17th century. You can watch the recording of this interesting presentation at https://youtu.be/jm_ZUrwWDY

The following article by David Savage originally appeared in the October 2015 issue of the CDHS newsletter:

Tidbits from *The Evening Guide*

While researching railway topics, CDHS member David Savage noted several interesting items:

From *The Evening Guide*, March 27, 1911:

“The plans for the proposed new Grand Trunk Railway station and improved yards at Cobourg were submitted to the Town Council for inspection. The blue print shows a vast improvement over the present station and yards, with abundance of tracks for storing and making up trains. The tracks will be raised considerably to relieve the heavy grade. The new station will be erected between Division and George Streets, will be constructed of cut stone up to the window sills and finished off with brick. The baggage room is to be connected with the main building by a platform similar to the Canadian Northern Railway, with an umbrella top to protect passengers from the sun’s rays and the rain. The blue print of the Division St. subway was also laid before the Council, and also the plan for the grade of the track from the ferry dock, from University Avenue to the main line. If the contemplated work is carried out there will be busy times around the Grand Trunk station this summer.”

From *The Evening Guide*, November 21, 1911:

“At last the long promised new Grand Trunk station has materialized, and it is acknowledged to be one of the most up to date east of Toronto. The building is modern in every respect, constructed of pressed brick and well finished inside. The architecture is imposing and all sanitary improvements are included. The waiting rooms are fairly large, the agent’s quarters and operator’s departments are light and airy, and in every way an acceptable improvement to the old station. The bar and lunch room are rather small, but as no meals are to be served there, it is thought the accommodation will be ample.”

In 1911 it required only eight months to progress from the first viewing of tentative plans to completion of an imposing building together with new tracks and streets for access. How long did the recently completed enhancements to the VIA station require?

David Savage had expert knowledge of Canadian railway history and authored two books on railway stations and their architecture.

The snapshot to the right shows David Savage with Judy Cross on the 2014 CDHS trip to the Peterborough Locks. Sadly, David recently passed after almost a decade in Streamway Villa following a debilitating stroke. David and his expert knowledge of railway history will be missed.



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